

# SPIKES

## Delivering Serious News

### SETTING

*Find a quiet location; private if possible.  
Invite the important people to be present.  
Have tissues and enough chairs.  
Turn off the ringer on your phone/pager.*

### PERCEPTION

Determine what the patient knows already

*“Tell me what you understand about your illness.”  
“What have the other doctors told you about your illness?”  
Look for knowledge and emotional information as the patient responds*

### INVITATION

Clarify information preferences

*“Would it be okay for me to discuss the results of your tests with you now?”  
“How do you prefer to discuss medical information in your family?”  
“Some people prefer a global picture of what is happening and others like all the details, what do you prefer?”*

### KNOWLEDGE

Give the information

*Give a warning...“I have something serious we need to discuss”  
Avoid medical jargon.Say it simply and stop. (e.g.“Your cancer has spread to your liver. It is getting worse despite our treatments.”)*

### EMPATHY

Respond to emotion

*Wait quietly for the patient.  
“I know this is not what you expected to hear today.”“This is very difficult news.”*

### SUMMARY

Next steps and followup plan

*“We’ve talked about a lot of things today, can you please tell me what you understand.”  
“Let’s set up a follow-up appointment.”*